

BOSTON, JANUARY, 1856.

THE COQUETTE.

BY MRS. MARY MAYNARD.

"Is it not cruel to wound our kind cousin's feelings with your coquetry, sister mine? You know how fondly he loves you; how many proofs he has given of his devotion to you; how sensitive he is to slight or neglect; and yet you indulge in that folly that distresses him most," and the speaker wound her fair arms round her sister's waist, and looked up lovingly into her eyes, as if to plead for pardon for her unasked advice.

"You may spare your lectures, Alice—I shall act as I think proper; and Sidney has no right to control me—no more right than you have to censure me;" and with an impatient movement, the angry beauty strove to free herself from the clinging arms.

"Florence, forgive me; I meant not to censure you; and if I said more than was proper, you must excuse my hasty words. You know how good our cousin is; how well he has supplied a brother's place to us; and now, when you have won his heart, and all his hopes and wishes are centered on your love, I cannot see you fling aside that heart, and crush those hopes, without one word to warn you of the danger of such flirtation when exercised on one like him. You do not love this stranger who has so completely engrossed your attention for the past three days; and yet your unkindness to Sidney has clouded his brow, and filled my heart with sorrow."

And the gentle girl again raised her eyes to her sister's face, as if to find there some hope of

a favorable answer to her entreaties, while the tears rolled slowly down her flushed cheeks.

"What folly, Alice! I do not love our handsome cousin; and surely you will not blame me if he has been so unwise as to bestow his heart on my unworthy self. Nor do I think him more worthy of pity than a score of others, on not one of whom did you think proper to waste those precious tears. Sidney would no doubt feel deeply grateful did he but know how sincere a friend he had in his fair cousin Alice, and might find consolation in his disappointment. May I inform him of the interest you feel in the success of his suit?"

There was no answer to the sarcastic question; and Alice, slowly rising from her sister's side, left the room. For a few moments Florence gazed after her in a half-repentant manner, as if she would fain call back the gentle sister; but in a little time the cloud passed from her brow, and with a sigh of relief, she took from her bosom a letter. After closely examining the seal and direction, she opened the envelope, and with burning cheeks, and unconcealed joy flashing from her beautiful eyes, read the warm love-words traced on its pages. After twice reading down the magic words, she pressed the precious manuscript to her lips, and kissing it again and again, carefully replaced it in her bosom, and clasping her hands over it as if to make sure of its safety, leaned back on the rich velvet cushions of her lounge, and closed her eyes, as if to ponder over the new joy.

Very beautiful she looked as she reclined there; her lips half parted with a triumphant smile, and her cheeks flushed with pleasure; her hands, nervously clasped together, betrayed her excited state of mind, and a little foot in its velvet slipper beat impatient time on the soft ottoman. For ten minutes she sat, the image of gratified pride and joy, and then other thoughts swept through her mind; and the flush left her face, the clasped hands sunk slowly to her lap, her bosom heaved with heavy sighs, and her heart beat painfully, as if it would burst through the confining folds of her crimson robe. Fast the hot tears fell on her hands, and glittered on the precious gems that adorned her slender fingers; but like a summer shower, the cloud soon passed off, and pressing her hands to her face she crushed the remaining tears beneath the long lashes, and rising, stood before the mirror endeavoring to remove all traces of her recent emotion.

While she is thus employed we will give the reader a more satisfactory introduction to the persons already brought before them, as also to some yet unknown. Florence and Alice were the daughters of Sir Richard Harwood, a rich English baronet. They had lost their mother in early childhood, and their father, eschewing the matrimonial snares laid for him by numberless husband-hunting young ladies, and feeling keenly the loss of a beloved wife, had devoted several years to retirement, and in the society of his little girls, and in the improvement and care of his numerous tenantry, had found comfort and consolation. As years passed on, and his daughters grew up, Sir Richard felt it to be his duty once more to mingle in those scenes where his lost wife had once been so bright a star, and no longer deprive his beautiful daughters of the advantages afforded them by their wealth and station. He invited his sister-in-law, the widow of his brother, and the mother of his heir, to become the mistress of his town mansion, and be the escort of his motherless girls into those scenes of London society that her superior wisdom and thorough knowledge of that society well fitted her for.

She was a middle-aged, handsome woman, well educated and of exceedingly prepossessing manners. For many years she also had lived in the country, disgusted with society and all the world; but when, at her brother's entreaty, she once more resumed her place, there were many who warmly welcomed her return; and she soon found herself the centre of an intellectual and refined circle, far removed from the common insipidity of London society.

To Sir Richard, the renewal of old friendships, and the constant meetings with old time acquaintances, was exceedingly pleasant after so many years of separation; and as the young ladies were evidently pleased with the new life opened to them, it appeared at first sight as if the change had been an unusually happy one.

But there was one who did not rejoice in the prospect before him; one whose heart did not throb with joyous anticipations, and whose fears outbalanced all other sensations, and that one was Sidney Harwood, the nephew and heir of Sir Richard, the playfellow and friend of his daughters—the lover of Florence.

In the retirement and quietude of their life at Harwood Park, the girls had always welcomed their handsome and entertaining cousin with the warmest expressions of joy. And he, as he watched the growing loveliness of Florence, and listened to her gentle voice, murmuring sweet sisterly welcomes as he embraced and kissed her—as he had always done since they were children—felt his heart throb with delight at the thought that this beautiful flower, which was all his own, had known no other love. But there was a rival in Florence's heart, all undreamed of by her unsuspecting cousin, scarcely known at this time to herself; a powerful rival, before whose mighty strength poor Sidney's love should be swept away as a leaf before the wind; and this love was her love of admiration. Openly admired by her father and sister, flattered by her attendants, and almost adored by Sidney himself, it would have been impossible for Florence not to have known herself beautiful; and it was impossible to conceal her joy at their proposed introduction to society—joy that sent a terror to her lover's heart.

He knew the trying ordeal through which a young beauty passes, made more dangerous if she herself courts the admiration so lavishly bestowed on a new favorite, and the delight she had so earnestly expressed gave him but little reason to feel gratified with the prospect before him. Once he thought of immediately making known to her father his wishes and intentions, and also his dissatisfaction at the proposed arrangement; but on asking his mother's advice—in whom, by the way, he placed implicit confidence—she strongly persuaded him from so hasty a step.

"If Florence is worthy of your love, my son, she will not change; and you should rather rejoice that you will have this opportunity of judging of her character, her constancy, and her attachment for yourself. Residing in the same house, you will have every facility for your pur-

pose of learning a disposition which, with all due deference for your superior judgment, I think far from perfect."

Poor Sidney was but little comforted by his mother's advice, and resolved, let what would come, never to lose his faith in the perfection of his idol.

A very short residence in town showed the wisdom of Mrs. Harwood's prophecies, and filled her son's mind with despair. Florence yielded herself entirely up to the fascinating influence of adulation and flattery, and became a dangerous coquette, winning hearts for the mere pleasure of flinging them away again; and yet so perfectly free was she from scorn or ill-temper in the treatment of her victims, so enchanting had she become in her new and exciting mode of life, that not a whisper was even breathed against her, even by those who felt her cruelty most. Many sighed in secret over her coldness of heart, but all were ready to bow before her, to attend her steps, to wait her pleasure, to fulfil her slightest wishes. To the gentle Alice, this triumph gave mingled pain and pleasure. That her sister should be loved and admired, caressed and sought after, was all right and quite natural she thought, but that Sidney should be slighted and rendered unhappy, his love disregarded and himself neglected, was more than her kind heart could bear unmoved. She had frequently sought for an interview with her sister of late, but Florence avoided her, and it was only by chance that she had found her sufficiently at leisure to hold the conversation that was concluded at the commencement of our story.

Alice was two years younger than her sister, and of quite a different style of beauty. While Florence rejoiced in the glossy black tresses, flashing eyes and brilliant complexion of the Harwoods, Alice looked no less lovely in some eyes, with her soft, light curls, clear blue eyes, and delicate rose-leaf complexion, especially when those beautiful eyes filled with tears of compassion at a sad tale, or her delicate cheek flushed with pleasure at seeing some loved friend. Sir Richard was proud of his eldest daughter, proud of her beauty and accomplishments, her wit and grace, and very proud of the admiration she excited; but when he was weary of society, of the glitter and false show of ball rooms, the hollow-heartedness of so-called society, it was to his Alice he looked for refreshing and comforting, to her and her sweet conversation, so pure and fresh amid a world of glittering deceit, that in his heart the father blessed the lovely image of his lost wife, and felt thankful no one had yet usurped his place in her heart.

To her aunt, Alice was also very dear, and it had long been a source of grief to that good lady that her only son should be so blind to the perfections of his youngest cousin. But Sidney was far from blind in this respect, and had long loved and respected Alice, although his heart was completely under the control of another. That Alice had a more than sisterly regard for her cousin, Mrs. Harwood had long suspected, and her anxiety for Sidney's happiness had opened Florence's eyes to something of the same idea. Hence her rather insulting speech on the morning when Alice made her last effort to induce her to change her conduct in regard to their cousin. The stranger mentioned by the younger sister, was a gentleman with whom Sir Richard had been slightly acquainted some ten years previously. They had met quite unexpectedly in London, the acquaintance was renewed, and Colonel Burton invited to his friend's house. Sir Richard would have ridiculed the idea of danger to his young daughters in the society of a man almost as old as himself, but it was soon evident that the beautiful Florence took unusual interest in the conversation of the handsome officer, and equally evident that he was interested in return. To her father, this gave pleasure, as he hoped she was growing weary of the attentions of the numerous fashionable young men who unceasingly followed her; but to Alice it was a new source of trouble, as she felt convinced that the stranger was far more likely to prove a rival to Sidney than all the gay flatterers who had hitherto come between him and his love.

Colonel Burton had long been set down by those who knew him best, as a confirmed old bachelor. Not that he despised ladies' society, or had too good an opinion of himself and liberty, but simply because he had passed unharmed through all the traps and snares so bewitchingly laid for him by cunning match-makers. If he has lived so long heart whole, they argued, it is not likely he will change his old habits, and settle down into married life, now, when his taste for travelling and adventure has become a habit.

"The beauty may fascinate our young beaux," said a titled dowager, the mother of half-a-dozen homely daughters, and a little envious of Florence's popularity among the gentlemen; "but with all her winning arts, she will find the colonel more than her match."

The objects of her remarks were at that moment apparently unconscious that the world contained aught save themselves and each other—the gentleman in eager conversation, the lady

listening with deep attention, her flushed cheek and downcast eye betraying how interesting his words were to her feelings.

That the dowager, Lady M——, had good reason to believe the colonel difficult to catch, there could be no doubt, but that he was uncatchable, there were many who left the ball room that night, who certainly doubted. When Colonel Burton found himself alone in his room that night, he paced the floor for an hour, apparently revolving in his mind some knotty question. At last he came to a full stop, and throwing himself into a chair, exclaimed :

"Yes, I will marry her ; she loves me, and I will marry her ;" and without further deliberation, he drew his elegant writing-desk to the edge of the table, and penned the words that filled the heart of Florence with such new emotions.

She had felt from the first that he possessed a strange influence over her ; and now when she read the words that told her how powerful her charms had been in conquering a heart so long invincible, it was little wonder that gratified pride was the first sensation. This mood was quickly changed into a painfully distressing recollection of Sidney's love and despair, and caused the tears to flow from her own excited heart. Her tears were soon banished by the thought that to-day her hand was to be asked of her father—to day she was to receive the colonel as her lover.

Ringling for her maid, she proceeded to dress with unusual care, and had scarcely arranged the last fold, and clasped on the last bracelet, when summoned to meet her father in the library. She cast one glance in the mirror to convince herself that all was right, and then slowly descended the wide staircase, her heart beating loudly, and her hands trembling with agitation. One moment she held the handle of the door, and then turning it quickly she found herself in the presence of her aunt, her father, and Colonel Burton. The first looked distressed, the second evidently out of humor, and the last not a little discomposed.

She felt the warm, suffocating sensation of a person fainting, and would have fallen to the floor had her father not supported her. Placing her in a chair, he proceeded to ask if she was aware of the colonel's errand. On her signifying an affirmation, he told her to consider solemnly what she was doing, not hastily to form a contract so solemn, but that if it was necessary to her happiness he should not forbid it, however unsuitable their ages were. Her answer was, to hold out her hand to the colonel, which

that gallant officer knelt to receive, pressing the white and jewelled fingers to his lips, and inwardly admiring his ladylove's taste in dress. The father looked sad, the aunt still distressed ; but the principal actors in the scene performed their part to perfection.

It was at this unfortunate juncture, while the colonel was still on one knee, Florence, with her handkerchief to her eyes, considerably affected, and her aunt and father deliberating on the propriety of leaving them alone together, that Sidney gently unclosed the door, expecting to find his uncle alone as usual, with the morning paper.

One glance was sufficient to show him how matters stood, and withdrawing as silently as he had entered, he slowly ascended the stairs again, on his way to his own room. In the gallery he had to pass a deep window, and attracted by the sound of sobs, he drew aside the curtain, and there, on the cushioned seat, her favorite reading place, with her face buried in the pillows, lay poor Alice.

Lifting her from her despairing attitude, he seated himself beside her, and smoothed the wet curls from her face. He kissed her cheek, as he had done when in her childish griefs she had fled to him for comfort, but now she shrank from the touch of his lips, and strove to free herself from his supporting arms. He drew her to him more forcibly, and while a paler shade came over his already death-like countenance, asked, in a hoarse voice :

"Will you cast me off, too, Alice?"

And then when the slight form quivered in his embrace, and he felt the wild throbbing of her heart against his breast, he pressed one long, despairing kiss on her lips, and again placing her on the sofa, rushed to his own room. While Alice lay fainting in the cushioned recess, and Sidney knelt beside his couch, vainly striving to overcome his misery, a very different scene was going on in the library.

Seated beside his beautiful betrothed, the colonel looked all the joy and pride he felt. He was rich, and this alone was needed to complete his happiness, a young, a lovely wife. He did not love Florence, for love made no part of his disposition ; but he admired her, and rejoiced at the sensation his marriage would create. That she loved him, he was perfectly sure, and this had been the object of his life-long search—a beautiful wife, rich and affectionate. And none, to look on his young betrothed, could doubt her feelings towards him. Her downcast eyes, the varying color, told more than words how great was the power he possessed over her heart ;

and yet the colonel talked calmly and unconcernedly about their marriage, their journey to Italy, their future home; in fact, he told her all his plans for the future—that future in which she was to have so large a share,—and yet never by one word did he strive to banish the almost painful feeling of confusion overwhelming her.

It is true he watched the crimson blush mount up to her white forehead with a feeling of satisfaction, and felt the little hand he held in his own tremble and quiver with suppressed emotion; but had she withdrawn her hand, he would have made no effort to detain it; and as for kissing her blushing cheek or rosy lips, Colonel Burton would never have attempted any thing so likely to disarrange the elegant precision of her beautifully-dressed hair, or the graceful fall of her rich satin flowers.

Poor Florence! accustomed all her life to give free vent to her feelings, she felt a longing to throw herself into somebody's arms, and give way to her emotions. But there sat the colonel looking at her, kindly, it is true, but still by no means so sentimentally as she would have wished. She thought of Alice; but Alice would have no sympathy with her, as the betrothed of Sidney's rival. She thought of Sidney; of all his love and tenderness, of the many times he had folded her to his heart, imploring blessings on her head, of how rapturously he would have received the gift, so calmly accepted by another; and then her strength gave way, and she burst into a passionate flood of tears. The colonel looked astounded at this unexpected display, and after watching her for a few moments, got up and commenced to pace the floor.

Florence soon conquered her tears, and when she once more sat silent and still, her face covered with her hand. ~~Chief~~ he resumed his place at her side, and with quiet politeness, and in the gentlest tone imaginable, expressed his disapproval of all such violent displays of feeling. He said he was aware the events of the morning had been too exciting for her nerves, but hoped to meet her at the opera quite recovered; then finding that his words were not having the desired effect, and that her tears were flowing afresh, he once more lifted her hands to his lips, and with a low bow departed.

It seemed a day fated to bring sorrow to the occupants of that splendid mansion, for ere the sun set, Mrs. Harwood was called on to bid farewell to her darling son, nor could she find it in her heart to deny her consent to his departure, knowing how cruelly all his hopes had been crushed, and trusting that time and absence would efface the image of his cousin.

To his uncle, Sidney's absence was a great annoyance; he loved his company, and having a pretty clear idea of the cause of his sudden journey, felt a still greater dislike to the match that had caused so much trouble and grief in so short a time.

Sir Richard went out to walk off his annoyance; Mrs. Harwood went to her son's room to assist him in his hurried preparations; Florence double locked the door of her chamber, refusing admittance to all, and beginning to realize some of the misery of a marriage in which the love is all on one side; and Alice sat by her window, and silently wept over the troubles of the day. But when she saw the carriage drive to the door, the busy servants fling down the steps, place the heavy travelling trunks safely behind, assist Sir Richard in, and then draw back respectfully as Sidney advanced; and after shaking hands with the old gray-haired butler, who had carried him in his arms when a boy, step quickly in, and lean back on the cushions, poor Alice felt as if all her joys were taken away at once.

She felt deeply for her cousin leaving his home in this unhappy manner, but, like his mother, she thought it best that he should leave scenes that could only serve to remind him of happier days, and she breathed a fervent prayer that he might return to them safe, and cured of his unfortunate passion. She reproached herself when she recollected how she had repulsed his last kind caresses, and vainly wished that she could just ask him to forgive her rudeness. She was aroused by the entrance of her aunt, who, silently placing a parcel in her hand, kissed her and withdrew.

On unsealing the package, to her great joy she found it contained her cousin's miniature, and also an affectionate farewell note to herself, begging her acceptance of the likeness, entreating pardon for the unintentional distress his violence had occasioned her, explaining his reasons for not bidding her farewell in person, and begging her to continue a correspondence which he would commence on his arrival in Paris.

When Mrs. Harwood sought her nieces' chambers that night, as was her usual custom before retiring, she found Florence deep in the study of an illustrated monthly of Paris fashions and dress novelties. Her face still bore the marks of tears, but all other traces of distress had vanished, and she gaily asked her aunt's opinion on the rival merits of white satin and white brocade silk.

In her sister's chamber all was hushed and silent, and crossing the soft carpet with noiseless step, Mrs. Harwood leaned over the sweet sleep-

er, and kissed her delicate cheek. She smiled as she noticed the firm clasp of the slender white fingers, looking almost transparent in contrast with the blue silk coverlid, and caught flashes of the rich setting of Sidney's miniature, reflected by the light, in her hand. With a blessing on the head of her darling niece, she softly closed the door, and left her to her slumbers.

Colonel Burton insisted on having his marriage celebrated with as little delay as possible, and as Florence gave a willing assent to his wishes on the subject, busy preparations were immediately made for the wedding.

Alice treated her brother-expectant with a coldness quite unusual for her, and took but little part in the affair that engrossed the attention of the whole household with the exception of herself. At her sister's request, she usually spent an hour or two in the bride's own room every day, but no persuasions could induce her to enter the parlor, where her sister usually received her lover, when he was present.

One morning, when she had become completely tired of answering questions, admiring jewelry, and giving her opinion on various articles of dress, she was preparing to leave the room, when Florence suddenly asked when she had heard from Sidney. It happened that a letter had arrived that morning, and on her sister's expressing a wish to see it, Alice drew it forth from the folds of her dress. In doing so, her hand became entangled in the slender chain to which she had suspended her treasured miniature, and as she brought out the letter, the locket slipped from its hiding-place, also.

"Ah, a love gift, *ma belle!*" gaily exclaimed Florence, catching the likeness in her hand.

But when her eyes fell on the well-known features, and met the earnest glance of the dark eyes, so often turned to meet her own in bygone days, she became deathly pale, and with tearful eyes gazed long at the beautiful picture; then with an anxious look that touched Alice's tender heart, returned the precious gift. With an attempt to hide her confusion, Alice said:

"Only a brotherly present from our dear cousin." And she left the room.

From this time there was an increased coolness between the sisters, Florence evidently thinking that her sister was betrothed to Sidney, and feeling herself aggrieved at the same, notwithstanding she was about to marry, the man of her choice, and to whom she became each day more attached. Hers was a strange love, all the more powerful for the reason that she feared Colonel Burton, and never received from him those little kind and loving attentions

that go so far to sweeten the days of courtship. In all that was perfectly polite, and according to strict etiquette, the colonel was not found wanting, but there was none of that sweet sympathy between them, that Florence, even in her wildest days of flirtation, had never doubted would one day be hers. She loved the colonel with all her heart, and she, who had never yielded her will to another, in her life, now felt herself constrained to obey his every wish, to give up her own opinion on every occasion where they did not agree, and all without one word of thanks on his part, without the slightest symptom of gratitude.

Sidney had now been gone nearly three months, and the day appointed for the marriage of Florence drew near. Sir Richard had himself written to ask his nephew to return in time to be present at the ceremony, but as his answer pleaded pressing engagements, no more was said on the subject. For several weeks his letters had spoken of a certain Mr. Herbert and his sister Miriam, and from the terms in which he mentioned them, Alice concluded that they were in the habit of meeting daily. He represented Mr. Herbert as a most devoted brother, leaving home, and friends, and profession, to attend his invalid and orphan sister. That they were congenial spirits, and that Sidney had found such a friend, she rejoiced; but a little white hand was pressing on a beating heart as she read the glowing description he gave of the beauty, the talent, and the amiability of the fair sister of his friend. Poor Alice sighed as she read Sidney's enthusiastic description of his life in Italy—his life, made so happy by strangers. In imagination she beheld him in the flowery arbors he so frequently mentioned, seated beside the beautiful stranger, listening, entranced, to her sweet, low voice, breathing the loving Italian words of his favorite songs.

She felt but little encouragement to fulfil her design of surprising him with her own progress in music, as she heard of the proficiency of the lovely and interesting invalid. She grew pale and very quiet; but none thought it strange that so sensitive a disposition should feel keenly the separation from an only sister, and few noticed the retiring and unobtrusive bridemaid in the all-absorbing interest excited by the bride herself.

The sun shone brightly on the wedding morn, and never did a gayer party enter the church doors on a similar occasion, than that which attended Florence on this important day. A large party of officers, both army and navy, friends of Colonel Burton, added to the brilliancy of the scene, and their rich dress contrasted well with

the snowy lace robes of their bridesmaid's partners. Florence looked all she intended; and the happy colonel, at the conclusion of the service, drew her hand through his arm, and marched proudly down the aisle, with the look of a man quite satisfied with himself and the world.

In the confusion of the large party leaving the church, Alice and her partner were detained for some minutes in the porch waiting for the carriage. He was a pleasant, good-looking officer, and by way of passing the time as merrily as possible, gave her a very humorous description of an Italian wedding, at which he had been present a short time previously. After describing the ceremonies so religiously kept up by the peasantry of that country, he said he hoped soon to have the pleasure of congratulating their family on the marriage of one so near and dear to them all as his friend Sidney.

"Of course Miss Harwood was aware that her cousin had been engaged for nearly two months to a Miss Herbert, an exceedingly charming young lady."

Poor Alice listened to this confirmation of her worst fears with a sinking heart, and already worn out with the excitement of the morning, and the anxiety of her mind for the past few weeks, she leaned fainting against the wall, and when the carriage drew up to the door, and the party hastened to take their places, there was great confusion as the almost lifeless form was lifted up the steps and resigned to the care of the ladies.

All the way home their efforts were fruitless to recall the suspended faculties of the poor girl, and it was not until she was in her own room, and surrounded by the alarmed household, that Alice once more opened her eyes, and smiled on her anxious friends. She did not appear to witness the departure of the bridal party, but Florence found time to make a hasty visit to her sister.

She came into the room all fluttering with joy and excitement, and kissing Alice, and receiving her farewell blessings and good wishes, hastened away to join the waiting party in the hall. The last kisses were given and received, the father gave his child the parting embrace, the aunt whispered a few words of parting advice, the colonel shook hands with every one, and then assisting his bride to the carriage, and giving the last directions to his servant, the door closed with a slam, and they were gone.

For several days Alice was unable to leave her room, but when she once more made her appearance in the parlor, almost the first visitor

she received was the gentleman whose unfortunate speech had so nearly betrayed her secret. He was very kind, and made many inquiries about her health, but no allusion to their previous conversation; and Alice congratulated herself that in his alarm at her sudden illness, the subject had been forgotten. It was only as he took his leave, and spoke of returning to the continent, that Sidney's name was mentioned; and then only to ask, in a tone of ordinary politeness, if he could be the bearer of letters to the absent one.

Had Captain Lawson been as indifferent about her feelings as Alice supposed he was, he could scarcely have avoided noticing her confusion as he mentioned her cousin's name. The kind-hearted officer had seen enough of human nature to make him understand that there was something of more than common interest in his communication, to cause the lady to faint so suddenly. Added to this, he had been deeply impressed with the gentle loveliness of the inanimate girl, as he supported her insensible form and assisted in her recovery; and now, as the only return he could make for having so carelessly wounded her feelings, by repeating what might only be a report, he had resolved to seek Sidney, and learn the truth from his own lips. Should the reported engagement to Miriam Herbert prove true, Captain Lawson determined to lose no time in seeking the lady's heart and hand for himself, and securing what he felt to be a treasure beyond all price. On the contrary, if he found Sidney free and heart whole, he trusted to circumstances to give him a favorable opportunity to inform the young man of what he had discovered. It was a delicate mission, but Captain Lawson knew whom he had to deal with, and the importance of Sidney's answer to his own happiness urged him to lose no time in obtaining it. He had come to all these conclusions before he paid his farewell visit at Sir Richard's, and was only strengthened in his resolve on witnessing the emotion Alice betrayed at the sound of the beloved name.

Alice said farewell to her new friend and admirer with an almost envious feeling, inwardly wondering what he had done to deserve the happiness of so soon meeting Sidney, and little dreaming that the handsome man, whose good heart could be read in his countenance, had a very clear idea of what was thus passing in her mind.

It is true, she thought he held her hand, at parting, just one moment longer than was necessary, and that there was a look in the clear eyes, so earnestly bent on her own, that spoke

of something more than mere friendly regard for her health. But Alice had not vanity enough to suppose she had touched the heart of the rich and handsome Captain Lawson, whom half the young ladies of his acquaintance would have given up all their beaux for the sake of winning. Therefore, in her simplicity, she only set the captain down, in her mind, as an exceedingly pleasant acquaintance, far superior to the generality of their London friends, and in return for his kindness bid him adieu with even more than her wonted cordiality and sweetness.

We must now leave our friends in London, to recover from the excitement of the wedding, and the rather gloomy feeling that pervaded each mind after all was over, and follow the footsteps of the wanderer. In an elegant apartment, where every object bespeaks the taste and refinement of the occupants, and the evidences of sweet womanly fancies are scattered on every side, we again meet our hero.

His brow is no longer gloomy as when last we saw him, leaving his home and friends, but there is sadness in the glance of those beautiful eyes as they rest on the form reclining on a couch beside him, and as he leans his head on the carved back of the old-fashioned arm-chair, we hear a sigh, rather too sorrowful to be breathed by one who has scarcely seen his twenty-fifth summer.

The lady on the sofa appears to think so, too, for, opening her eyes and leaving her comfortable position, she bends over the old chair, and with the whitest hand in the world, and the softest touch, smooths back the dark curls from his forehead, at the same time gently reproaching him for being so gloomy. She is a lovely comforter, this same tall, spiritual-looking girl, with her large black eyes, and pure complexion. As she bends over the arm of the young man's chair, we cannot help comparing her to the delicate, easily crushed Calla, so graceful are her movements, so frail is her appearance. He must be a monster, indeed, who could withstand the sweet pleading and winning smiles of Miriam Herbert; and as Sidney is quite the reverse of hard-hearted cruelty, he immediately resumes his usual pleasant manner, and after insisting on her again taking possession of the sofa, draws a reading table to her side, and selecting a favorite book, commences to read aloud.

It was a sweet scene, that beautifully furnished room, with its open windows shaded by delicate green silk drapery, the costly vases filled with choice flowers, the books, the harp, the velvet-cushioned furniture. On the walls hung choice engravings and landscapes, the favorites of the young mistress, and as Captain Lawson stood

beside his friend in the open door-way, and leisurely surveyed the scene, he could imagine no addition to add to the beauty of the picture, save always the presence of a certain fair-haired maiden, who rarely left his thoughts. Sidney hastily laid down his book, and rose to meet his friend. After the first confused words of welcome were over, and Mr. Herbert had taken his seat on the sofa, with his arm round the slender waist of his sister, and was making fond inquiries about her returning strength and health, Captain Lawson expressed his wish for a few moments' private conversation with their guest.

There was something in his tone that startled the young man, and grasping his friend's hand with sudden violence, he exclaimed:

"My mother, my cousins?"

"Are all well, Harwood. Don't be alarmed; I wish to ask your advice, that's all;" and reassured by his pleasant smile, and the cordial grasp of his friend's hand, Sidney prepared to accompany him to his home. There was an eager eye watching the parting between Sidney and the fair Miriam, for love displays itself in trifles, but the captain found himself at fault this time, for his young friend appeared to share with her brother in a constant tender care for the invalid, and it was difficult to determine what was his motive. It might be love, it might be only friendship.

When they arrived at the house, and were safely ensconced in what Sidney called his "shell," or hiding-place, where, weary and low-spirited (as was frequently the case since leaving England), he first placed his friend in his own favorite easy-chair, then brought out a bottle of wine, and then announced himself ready for business.

Captain Lawson commenced the conversation by giving him an account of Florence's wedding, and then cautiously approached the subject of his engagement to Miss Herbert. For a few moments, there was an angry flush on Sidney's cheek, as he leaned his forehead thoughtfully on his hand and pondered on the strange question. But soon the frown passed away, and with a look that sought to read the other's meaning, he replied:

"I am at a loss to know your motive for asking me that question, Captain Lawson, but as I believe you to have some better one than mere curiosity, I do not hesitate to answer it, and here assure you, that to Miss Herbert I bear no nearer relation than that of a friend, a sincere friend."

For several minutes, there was silence in the little room, and then the captain proceeded to inform his astonished hearer of the circum-

stances attending the sudden illness of Alice, and his own share in it.

"I know you are too honorable to make any ungenerous use of what I have now confided to you, and if another possesses your heart, and you are unable to return your cousin's affection, let what has passed between us this day be buried forever in our breasts. I am only too happy to have the slight chance, thus afforded, of supplanting you. But if you love her, hasten at once to do away with the false impression I so unintentionally made, and I will conquer my love in time."

There was no mistaking the generous motives that had prompted his actions now, and Harwood was deeply touched by his last words.

"I cannot be as generous as you are, Lawson," he exclaimed, rising and grasping the hand extended to him. "Your words have given birth to visions of happiness such as I never expected to realize in this world, and I am quite unable to express the gratitude I feel for your generous kindness. There is but one drawback to my happiness, and that is the thought of leaving the Herberts. They have met with reverses, lately, that have compelled him to resume his profession, in order to support his sister, and supply her with those luxuries to which she has been accustomed. They have found but few acquaintances, and with the exception of myself, no intimate friends. Miss Herbert feels her brother's frequent absences keenly, suffering, in consequence, from extreme low spirits and nervousness, and it has been my constant endeavor to supply his place, and amuse her lonely, and frequently suffering, days."

"My time will be at my own disposal for at least two months," the captain answered, "and if I can be of any service or benefit to Mr. Herbert and his sister, most willingly will I promise to supply your place as far as lies in my power."

It was soon arranged that Sidney should depart on the morrow, and after dinner, they returned to Mr. Herbert's, to acquaint them with the sudden change in their friend's plans.

That Miriam Herbert had a sincere regard for Sidney, her grief at their approaching separation gave plain proof; and that she had entertained no tenderer sentiment, was equally evident from the undigressed manner in which she displayed that grief.

"I know how selfish I am, but you have soothed many a sad hour for me, and I cannot help dreading the cheerless days I shall spend when you are gone."

Sidney sat at the end of her sofa, with his hand smoothing the soft wavy hair from her

forehead. His heart was full of happy hopes, and he knew that joy awaited him in his home, and yet at the sight of her sorrow he felt half tempted to resign his own happiness, and remain with this poor motherless girl, who had not one relation in the world, besides her brother, and to whom he had rendered his presence so necessary. Mr. Herbert looked deeply grieved at the prospect of parting with one he loved so well, and from whose society he had derived much pleasure. The only hopeful countenance was Captain Lawson's, and after waiting until the first sorrowful exclamations were over, and each one had become calm, he very quietly left his place, and seated himself beside Miriam. There was a candid honesty about all this gentleman said or did, that invariably impressed people in his favor, and when he, with respectful kindness, offered his services to attend Miss Herbert in her walks and rides, and supply, as far as he could, the place of her brother, both the brother and sister felt comforted, and warmly thanked him for his kindness.

If Captain Lawson had felt as if he was making a sacrifice, in offering to share with poor Herbert the charge of his invalid sister, he was repaid at parting, when he held her little hand in his own, and heard the grateful words:

"I am contented to suffer, while Providence sends me such kind friends."

Nor did he think the less of his young friend, when he saw how deeply he was affected at parting with this beautiful girl, whose patient sweetness possessed so strange a fascination, and whose frail health rendered it extremely doubtful that they should ever meet again.

It was a dark, damp, London day, gloomy and forbidding enough, but all unheeded by Sidney Harwood, as he drove from the station to his uncle's residence. His heart beat loudly, as he stepped from the carriage and hastened up the steps, in the expectation of so soon beholding his dearest earthly friends.

His arrival was quite unexpected, and he was a little disappointed to learn that Sir Richard and Mrs. Harwood were both out. However, Miss Alice was at home, and should she be informed of his arrival? No, he would inform her himself; and leaving the servants to speculate on his sudden appearance, and unusual high spirits, he bounded gaily up the stairs. He had to pass through several rooms, and cross two long galleries, before he reached Alice's favorite recess, and by the time he arrived there, his mood had changed, and he was thinking of the last time he saw her, and their sad parting. It might be that Lawson was mistaken, that after

all she did not love him; but no, he would not indulge gloomy thoughts now, and, softly advancing, he beheld the object of his search deep in the perusal of a pile of old letters—letters that had a very familiar look to him. He thought she looked very pale, and his heart smote him at the thought of how many sad hours his gentle cousin must have passed.

With a quiet movement, he withdrew the curtain, and standing beside her, spoke her name. He did not feel hurt, now, that she bashfully shrunk away from his embrace, for he knew her secret, and only strove to calm her agitation. Seating himself beside her, he placed his arm round her waist, in the old familiar fashion, and commenced a general conversation on the passing events of the day. He waited, expecting to hear her make some inquiries about his new friends, but Alice would not trust herself to speak about what she could not even think of calmly. Finding that she did not mention them, he ventured to allude to Miss Herbert, and was quite satisfied with the result of his experiment when he saw the color rush violently to her face, the little hands start convulsively, and felt her whole form quiver beneath his encircling arm. It was easy, now, to guide the conversation as he wished, and it was an interesting study to mark the changes in the fair face beside him, as he explained the terms of friendly intimacy that existed between himself and the Herberts. Once convinced that he was still her own dear cousin, free from all engagements, and rejoicing at his return home, Alice resumed much of her old manner, and chatted and laughed as she had not done for many long months. Still there was a little reserve, and Sidney hastened to put an end to it. Asking what she had done with his likeness, he unclasped the hand that concealed it, and after thanking her for the care with which she had guarded it, and the honor bestowed on him by her wearing it, he held the little hand firmly in his own, and bending down his head, whispered sweet words in her ear.

Very pleasant words they appeared to be, judging by the effect they had on the fair listener at his side, who no longer attempted to free herself from the strong arm thrown around her, but sat calm and very still in her happiness. There was no need to ask her if she loved him—he read it in her countenance; and if his heart beat with less passion than he had once felt for Florence, his love was none the less pure and holy. A calm sense of content and happiness filled their minds, and for hours he sat there, holding her to his breast, and watching her ever-varying countenance, changing under his words.

There was general rejoicing in the household when it became known that the young master had returned to marry Miss Alice, and every one rejoiced in their happiness, from good old Sir Richard, who saw his long-cherished wishes fulfilled in the union of one of his daughters to the heir of Harwood, down to the old servants, who in Alice beheld the counterpart of her fondly loved mother, the late mistress of Harwood Hall. Sidney paid the most devoted attention to his young betrothed, studying her wishes, and striving to please her, with unremitting devotion, in the hope of atoning for all she had suffered on his account. His endeavors were rewarded by his own increased affection.

They were married soon after the family returned to Harwood Park, in the parish church, and by the good old minister who had baptized herself and sister. There were no fashionable guests, no extravagant displays of dress and jewelry—all was conducted to suit the quiet taste of the bride; and if there was less pomp and show than had attended the marriage of Florence, there was far more joy and happiness. A grand entertainment was provided to the numerous tenantry on the Harwood estate, to celebrate the marriage of the heir, and the occasion was one of general rejoicing.

They made a journey to Scotland, and on his return, Sidney was agreeably surprised at receiving a long letter from his friend Lawson, congratulating him on his felicity, and announcing his own intended union with the beautiful Miriam Herbert.

“Her brother is sacrificing health and happiness in his endeavors to maintain the same style of living to which they have always been accustomed. They are too proud to accept favors from a stranger; what can I do better, than to make the dear girl a sharer in the blessings that have been bestowed on myself? You may smile at the difference in our ages and dispositions, but I feel that we are admirably suited for each other, my cheerfulness having the happiest effect on her low spirits. I am quite certain that I could not love a wife always gay and blooming. There is a world of happiness in knowing that my gentle Miriam clings to me as a safe support, and is dependent on my love for her every joy and comfort.”

There was a mischievous look in Sidney's bright eyes, as he watched the admiring expression of his wife's countenance, when she perused this characteristic epistle, and when she claimed his praise for the generous writer, he quietly told her how deeply concerned that writer had once been in her own affairs.

THE DIAMOND RING.

BY EMILY N. REDFORD.

It was as beautiful a summer's morn as ever shone upon the earth; the calm bright sunshine poured down in a soft flood over the cultivated fields and flourishing gardens in the village of L. Apart from the neat white cottages which distinguished this little village, was one much smaller than the rest. One side was shadowed by two large apple-trees, and the other was covered with moss which run nearly over the low-thatched roof. The interior of the sweet little cottage presented as pleasant an appearance as that without. An old lady sat in an arm chair, knitting, and by her side a beautiful girl perhaps sixteen or seventeen years of age was seated, apparently engaged in deep thought. An open book at her feet, which had fallen from her hand, showed she had been reading, but it was evident her mind was far away from the scenes before her. Now and then, the elder of the two would raise her eyes to the face of her companion, and her lips moved as if she would speak, but then changed her mind and continued silent. At last she concluded to break the silence, and as the sound of her voice broke the stillness, the young girl started from her seat.

"Ellen, are you ill?"

"No, my dear aunt, why do you ask?"

"I have been watching you some time, and have come to the conclusion that something must be the matter, or you would not have been so absorbed in thought."

"Well, dear aunt, I am afraid you will say I have been building castles in the air, when I tell you what I have been thinking about."

She paused a moment as if to allow her aunt to make some reply, but she only smiled and made a motion for her to proceed, so her niece continued.

"Last evening when I went to the store, Mr. Turner had gone to supper; while waiting for him to return, I heard one of our neighbors ask another, who was to keep our village school this year, and he replied they had been unable to find any one. I have been trying all the morning, to summon courage sufficient to ask you if you thought I might obtain the situation if I applied, and perhaps in a year, I could save enough to enter the seminary at T. as an assistant-pupil. Will you please tell me what you think about it?" looking up at her aunt, who had industriously kept at work all the time her niece had been speaking.

Mrs. Moore let her knitting fall into her lap, and leaning her head upon her hand gazed at the bright, sparkling face so eagerly upturned to hers.

"I am willing, Ellen, you should try, but do not be discouraged if you meet with a refusal."

It seemed this was all Ellen wished, for hastily putting on her bonnet, she was soon tripping lightly in the direction of Mr. Howard's dwelling, the school-agent.

Long and anxiously her aunt waited her return, until the stars began to shine and the pale face of the moon appeared from behind the distant hills. At last she came, and the glance with which her aunt greeted her, asked more plainly if possible than words, of her success.

"Dear aunt, I have obtained the situation, are you not rejoiced?"

Mrs. Moore smiled, and inquired why she had remained so long away.

"Mr. Howard was not at home, and Mrs. Howard invited me to stay until he came, and I disliked to come away without receiving an answer, so I waited for him. I could not resist the temptation of walking past the old school-house, which you know is a little out of the way." Ellen chatted gaily on for some time, until the clock struck eight, when, taking the Bible to her aunt, sat on a stool at her feet and listened while she read "the Sermon on the Mount."

She could not but notice that her aunt's voice

trembled, when she prayed that He, who had never ceased to watch over, and guard from evil, would give strength and patience to her who alone remained to be the comfort and solace of her declining years. Silently she kissed her aunt, and with a slower step than usual sought her couch.

The morning came for school to commence, and Ellen, with a beating heart, but not an altogether sad one, went to her task. At first, she was a little disheartened at the work which presented itself to her, the realization of her hopes did not seem quite as sure. Steadily, however, she kept on, and when at the end of the year she was enabled to enter the Misses Horton's school for young ladies, she felt she was more than repaid for all she had passed through. Leaving her for a short time I will give you a sketch of her history.

Her mother, Mrs. Moore's only sister, was considered the belle not only of the village in which she lived but also of the neighboring towns. At a fair she became acquainted with James Graham, the son of a very rich planter at the South. Against his father's wishes he married her, choosing to depend on his own exertions for support than remain dependent on his father, whose only objection to his marriage was the lady's poverty. He parted from his father in anger, hurriedly embraced his weeping sister, and went forth from his father's house nevermore to return.

Soon after his marriage he entered into business in one of our northern cities. Change of climate, the constant confinement necessary to his success as a merchant, soon wrought fearful work with a constitution naturally delicate, and having been a wife only about two years, Mrs. Graham returned to her sister, her only relative, a broken-hearted widow, with one little daughter, Ellen, named for her husband's mother.

Depression of spirits which nothing could dissipate, not even the kind attempts of her former companions, hurried her to the grave, and at the tender age of four years Ellen was left an orphan, dependent upon her aunt, who possessed sufficient to place her above want, nothing more.

Let us give a glance at the place which Ellen for a time has called her home, the Misses Horton's seminary. It is the evening before school closes. Assembled in groups in the handsome parlors are the pupils. Many of them, nay the most, are children of wealthy parents, and who are sufficiently aware of the importance which money everywhere carries. Some of the younger scholars are examining the wreaths with

which the recitation-hall is to be decorated; others are carefully marking specimens of needle-work which are to be exhibited, and a few are speaking of home and friends, and the pleasure which they anticipate in joining them. By far the most interesting are collected round the piano, arranging the pieces which are to be performed, and discussing the merits of the several performers, each one giving her opinion as to who would be most likely to win the prize. An eccentric bachelor, uncle to a little girl, a member of the school, had offered an elegant diamond ring to any pupil who should play and sing in the best manner on the night of the exhibition. The choice of the song was left to the performer, the judges were to be from the audience on the night of the performance.

Considerable excitement had prevailed among the young ladies, and a continual drumming had been kept up. Every song which could be procured had been tried, and some of the best players remained undecided which to choose. Those which were simple had been cast aside on that account, those which were difficult, they were afraid to trust, fearing their hearers might not be sufficiently skilled in music to appreciate; altogether, they were in rather trying circumstances, as several of their countenances indicated.

"What is your opinion, Miss Ellen Graham?" said Fanny Owen, the belle of the school, and who, from the first day of Ellen's membership had taken every opportunity of wounding her feelings. "Who do you think is most likely to obtain the prize?" at the same time casting a scornful glance towards her companions, who, with eyes fixed upon the person spoken to, awaited her reply.

"I know of no one more likely than yourself," was the calm rejoinder.

"Do you think so?" said Fanny, in a mocking tone. "Why, I am really obliged for your compliment. I suppose I ought to say in return, that I stand no chance since you are to perform; but if you will allow me to give a little advice, I would request you not to wear that everlasting black silk, which you have always worn on all public occasions, and which looks as if descended from the fourth generation, a kind of heirloom in the family."

Many of the girls were indignant, and when they saw Ellen's eyes fill with tears, had courage sufficient to say, "For shame, Fanny!"

Fanny, however, felt no sorrow, and dancing away to the other part of the room, in answer to the inquiries of her friends what caused the exclamation, replied, "O, I was only giving Ellen Graham a hint to wear something beside that old

black dress, which brother Theodore said, reminded him of the days of yore."

Meantime the tears which these thoughtless remarks caused, attracted the notice of a little girl, Mary Gordon, niece to the gentleman who offered the ring, and going to Ellen, she threw her arms round her neck, whispering, "I love you dearly, no matter what dress you wear!"

Taking the child's hand in hers, she passed into the hall, and for a few moments wept bitter, scalding tears. Yielding at last to the entreaties of her little friend, she went to the upper music-room to hear Mary practise her piece for the twentieth time.

The next evening came, and with it parents and friends from every direction. Ellen had no one to come, her aunt could not leave her quiet home, and with a feeling of utter loneliness, she heard the joyful greetings her companions met.

With a heavy heart she prepared to make her appearance; her dress looked to her more rusty than ever, her hair never seemed so perfectly unmanageable. After repeated efforts she at last declared herself ready, and taking her music followed her companions into the hall.

Very beautiful they all looked as they took their seats; so many young hearts, could they be the home of any but pure thoughts? As Ellen passed Fanny Owen to take the seat assigned her, she noticed the scornful look bestowed on her dress, and glad to escape observation, took her place behind the others.

The exercises were not to consist of musical performances entirely, but commenced with an overture played by a young lady in a very skillful manner. When it came Miss Owen's turn to perform, a murmur of admiration was heard as she appeared. Her piece was an air from a celebrated opera; she was very beautiful as she stood there, her dark eyes more brilliant than usual with excitement, her glossy curls falling in rich profusion. More than half the hearts were won before she had uttered a note. Her voice, although a very fine one, owed much to cultivation, but there was no faltering in her tones, and when she disappeared from the stage, she felt but little doubt she had triumphed.

"Ah me!" sighed Ellen to herself, "it is of no use for me to try. I know Fanny will win."

The evening's entertainment was drawing to a close when Ellen's song was called for. With trembling steps she passed before the people. For a few moments she felt as if she were dreaming, not a sound could she articulate. Observing her agitation, the audience waited in respectful silence for her to recover her self-possession, content to gaze upon the being before them.

Instead of the dark eyes of Fanny, were deep, soft blue ones which few could meet without loving the owner. Her black dress but showed more plainly the finely formed figure so light and graceful. A plain gold pin fastened a band of black velvet which encircled her throat. She was a specimen of that "loveliness which needs not the foreign aid of ornament." Her hair did not fall in curls, but was combed very smoothly and placed behind her ears. Fanny reminded one of a bright star, Ellen, a lovely flower, the lily of the valley. The one shedding a cold light, the other, a sweet fragrance.

Unrolling her music she commenced in low but sweet tones the simple ballad, "Kathleen Mavourneen." Gradually as she gained confidence, her tones grew louder and more distinct, until every part of the hall was filled with melody. Some of her hearers who had been in the habit of attending concert-rooms, forgot but what they were then there, and when the song was ended, signified their delight of her singing with the most enthusiastic applause, in which all joined.

On one of the front seats sat an elderly gentleman with a much younger one beside him. During the singing the eyes of the elder had remained fixed upon Ellen as if entranced. When she ceased, he grasped his neighbor's arm and in husky tones inquired her name. His companion without turning his head answered, "Miss Graham." For a moment the old man buried his face in his hands, then suddenly raised it, as Ellen began warbling in compliance with request the touching song, "Sweet Home," every feature he seemed examining. In a short time the exercises were through, but owing to the lateness of the hour, the presentation of the ring was deferred until the next evening, when a social levee was to be held, every person then present being invited to attend.

"Once more, my old friend," said Ellen, to her one silk dress, as she arrayed herself in it the next night. "You have proved faithful when others proved false." Just as she was about leaving her room, a bouquet of most rare and beautiful flowers was brought to her. "Some mistake," she said to the servant. He pointed to the paper, on which was written her name, and underneath, "True merit never goes unrewarded."

She stood very thoughtful for a moment, then speaking to herself as if she had solved the mystery, "Ah, I see! some one thought Fanny was Miss Graham, that is it, I am sure;" and removing the label went to Fanny's room, placed the bouquet in her hand, telling her at the same

time that she presumed it had been delivered to her by mistake.

"Very likely," said Fanny, without even thanking Ellen, who thought she had never seen her look so lovely.

"Where are my gloves?" said Fanny, in a petulant tone; "however, I shall not put them on, for I should never succeed in getting them off, if Mr. Graham should insist upon placing the ring upon my finger himself. I am told he is very handsome, besides being very wealthy. If I were you," turning to Ellen, "I would try to make an impression upon the giver, since there is little chance of obtaining the gift, for I heard a gentleman say that it required but little knowledge of music to sing your songs." Taking her bouquet she descended to the brilliantly lighted parlors, to which Ellen soon after followed.

Ellen sought a retired corner where she could escape notice. Sad and silent she sat for a long time, trying to make her heart feel glad in the happiness of others.

"Will Miss Graham favor us with one more song?" asked the old gentleman who inquired her name the evening before.

"With pleasure, sir," said Ellen, feeling attracted towards the speaker in a manner she could not account for. "Have you any choice?"

"I should like," he replied, with a mournful smile, "the last rose of summer."

Ellen hesitated, for it was the first song she had ever learned, taught her by her mother, because it was her father's favorite. She never sung it to strangers, but seeing he waited, thought best to comply. All her sad feelings found utterance in her voice, and when she concluded there were few eyes not filled with tears.

As she was about to resume her former seat, her hand was gently taken, and a voice, whose mellow tones seemed but a continuance of her song, said distinctly for all to hear:

"Allow me to thank you for the pleasure you have given us, and to beg your acceptance of this ring, which all agree is well merited."

Ellen gave one glance at the sparkling eyes bent so kindly upon her, and unable to collect her thoughts sufficiently to make a suitable reply, stood motionless. A stifled sob caused her to raise her eyes a second time, when they encountered the burning orbs of Fanny Owen. Disappointment and rage made even her beautiful face look frightful, and the gaze which met Ellen's told of mingled scorn and hatred.

Overcoming her natural timidity, she slipped the glittering circlet from her finger, and said:

"Indeed, sir, I am very, very grateful for your kindness, but I cannot retain a reward which is

far above my deserts. Miss Owen's piece was much more difficult than mine, and I think the bestowal of it upon her would give general satisfaction."

Mr. Gordon seemed undecided for a moment, then turning to the company, said, "Since Miss Graham disputes our judgment, I know no other resource but to follow hers," and refusing to receive the ring from Ellen, requested her to present it to Miss Owen.

All traces of unhappiness had vanished from Fanny's countenance, and she was again the smiling beauty, receiving the ring from Ellen's hand in the most graceful manner.

The latter part of the evening passed more pleasantly than the first; she felt she had done right, and when she heard Fanny's gay tones, and merry laugh, she was sure she felt happy too.

Nearly all the assembly had gone; Ellen noticing the bouquet which she carried to Miss Owen lying upon the floor, picked it up, and was examining it, when some one at her side said: "Miss Graham, do you refuse *all* gifts?" pointing at the same time to the flowers.

Not quite understanding him, she answered, "They are not mine, I was merely looking at them."

"If I am not mistaken," he continued, smiling, "they were intended for you, did you not receive them?"

"I did," she replied, "but I supposed a mistake had been made in the name, and gave them to Miss Owen."

"Do you leave to-morrow?" he inquired abruptly, after a moment's pause.

Ellen answered in the affirmative, and soon after, bidding him good evening, went to take leave of her teacher and companions, as she started very early in the morning, careful, however, to retain her flowers.

Little Mary Gordon wept, and clung to her, making her promise over and over again to visit her. At last, she had bade farewell to all her friends; but she felt as if she would like to speak once more with the old gentleman who had made such an impression upon her; he was talking, however, and she did not like to disturb him. He noticed her as she passed, and bade her good-night so kindly that she could not resist offering her hand. "God bless you, my child!" he exclaimed, holding it a moment.

She retired to dream of meeting her aunt and singing old snatches of songs she learned in childhood, and wandering with a dark-eyed companion to all her favorite haunts. Before the morning dawned, she was on her way, amusing herself in conjecturing what the wrapping of a

package which had been handed her just as the stage started, concealed.

She could but notice after the first joyful moments had passed, that her aunt had sadly altered. Her step was less firm, her form more bowed, and her voice more weak and trembling. The package was found to contain a handsomely bound edition of Shelley, an elegant gold watch, and a note from Mary Gordon, who wrote that she placed it there unknown. The giver of the poems she left for her to guess, and the blushes on Ellen's cheek showed she need guess but once. The watch was from the old gentleman, who held a very long conversation with her mother after their return to the hotel after the levee. The book received by far the most attention, although she felt pleased to think she was so kindly remembered as the watch proved.

Gradually her aunt's strength declined, and calling Ellen to her bedside, one still evening, begged her to read the evening service.

"You have been a good child, my darling, and God will protect you when I am gone," she added, faintly, as Ellen stooped to kiss the pale brow. Ellen read softly and when she had finished, raised her eyes to gaze upon the dead; the pure spirit had fled.

Mary Gordon's mother, as soon as she learned Ellen's bereavement, wrote, inviting her to accompany them on a southern tour, and to make her home with them as long as she could be contented. Ellen gladly accepted, left the home where she had spent so many happy hours, and was soon with her kind friends. The next day after her arrival, Mary came into the room where she was sitting and taking her hand said:

"Please come with me a moment, I have something I wish to show you."

Ellen passively yielded, and without noticing where she was leading her, said, "I hope it is something very beautiful."

Mary suddenly stopped walking, and with a light laugh answered, "Here it is; what do you think of it?"

Ellen looked and saw Mr. Gordon standing before her. The deepest color suffused neck, cheek and brow at the unexpected meeting, but he seemed not to notice it, and she felt while listening to him, she had indeed found a friend.

In a short time they commenced their journey, and Ellen could not quite prevent the feeling of joy being visible when Uncle Robert declared his intention of going with them.

"O, mother!" exclaimed Mary, mischievously, "see how pleased Nellie looks!"

Ellen tried to hide her blushing face, but not before more than one had noticed it, and the

happy expression of Uncle Robert showed he felt pleased also.

Reaching a fashionable watering place, while the weather was quite warm, they concluded to remain there a short time. One morning, as Ellen and Mary were taking an early walk, Ellen observed coming towards them, a lady and gentleman. The young lady she recognized as Fanny Owen; as she passed her she bowed, but received no return, and when they had proceeded a few steps, Ellen heard Fanny's companion say:

"I think that lady bowed, did you not notice her?"

"Yes," she replied, "a school acquaintance; a very poor young lady, who always gave herself airs; she is doubtless governess in some family here. I never remember such people!"

"O, what a falsehood!" cried Mary, in indignant tones, for she had heard what was said. Leaving Ellen, who in vain tried to detain her, she rushed to her mother and uncle who were coming to join them, repeating Fanny's words, adding:

"She always treated Nellie shamefully, and then took the ring which did not belong to her."

Ellen's flushed countenance showed her feelings had been hurt, and not willing to allow her friends to see the tears which their kind words only made flow faster, hastened to her room.

While she was absent Mary recited the story of the black silk dress, which so served to excite Mrs. Gordon's indignation that she resolved to leave the next day, and proceed on their journey. Mrs. Gordon wished to visit Savannah, so they bent their course that way, stopping wherever there was anything attractive. The beautiful and varied scenery soon banished all unpleasant recollections from Ellen's mind. Uncle Robert did his part towards amusing the orphan, and felt amply rewarded when she gave him one of her sweet smiles.

One day, they had been in Savannah, perhaps a week, as Mary sat beside Ellen holding her hand in both of hers, Mr. Gordon came in and gave her a beautiful fan which he had heard her express a great desire to possess a few days before. "O, what a good uncle I have!" she cried. "Do you not wish he was yours, Nellie?"

The hand which Mary relinquished to exhibit her present, was taken and gently pressed; a whispered voice repeated, "Do you wish he was yours, darling?"

Returning one morning from a ride, Mr. Gordon found a note addressed to him, which he said contained an invitation to a large gathering at the house of a friend of his, a wealthy planter living a short distance from the city. "You will have an excellent opportunity of seeing some of

the southern beauties. I hope you will not allow yourselves to be eclipsed," he added.

"I shall have to be excused," said Ellen, glancing at her sombre colored dress, now constantly worn for her aunt.

"Indeed you will not," they all replied.

Ellen answered by a gentle shake of the head, and left the room.

A long consultation was held by those remaining, and when Ellen again joined them, an answer had been sent signifying their acceptance.

"Do not look so sad, Nellie; I wish you to appear as beautiful as you possibly can," said Mary; "or we shall think you do not love us any."

"No, no, dear Ellen, we shall not think so," spoke Mary's mother, "we know you love us all a great deal."

"Am I included?" asked Mr. Gordon.

Ellen made no reply save a timid glance, which seemed to satisfy the questioner. Mrs. Gordon prevailed upon Ellen to cast aside her black dress for a white one.

"You must submit for once to be guided by our taste," laughingly said Mary, as she prepared to assist Ellen the evening of the party, displaying at the same time an elegant white satin dress. After her toilet was finished she went to the parlor to wait for the others. Mr. Gordon was already there, and approaching her, took a necklace of pearls from a casket, and clasped it round her neck. Gazing a moment upon the lovely vision before him, he drew her gently towards him and imprinted a soft kiss upon her pure forehead.

"Ah, what do I see!" cried Mary, entering the room. "I am afraid I shall have to say Aunt Nellie, soon."

"You may begin now!" said her uncle, leading the way to the carriage in waiting.

As they neared the dwelling, the sound of music came floating on the air, and streams of light as they drew nearer and nearer, showed that the spacious and numerous apartments were filled with wealth and beauty. Strange as it may seem, Ellen had not thought to inquire the gentleman's name to whose house they were going.

The sweet beauty of Ellen as she entered the room, excited much admiration. Leaning on Mr. Gordon's arm, not daring to lift her eyes, she did not notice he was leading her to the centre of the room, where stood an old gentleman, who, as she advanced, said, "I bid you welcome, Miss Graham!"

She could not be mistaken, they had met before. He smiled as he saw she recognized him, and speaking very loudly, added:

"In the presence of these, my friends, I acknowledge my grand-daughter, Ellen Graham, daughter of my son James, banished from his early home by his father, who too late saw his error." Taking her by the hand, he again said, "My grandchild, I bid you welcome!"

Ellen was much overcome, her heart swelled with gratitude to Him who in his mercy had prepared this new joy for her.

"There is a young lady, a ward of mine, to whom I wish to introduce you," said her grandfather, and moving to another part of the room returned with Fanny Owen. Placing her in front of Ellen, he asked, "Do you recognize a 'school acquaintance?' She wears not the faded silk dress, which reminded 'brother Theodore of the days of yore,' neither has she upon her finger a 'diamond ring,' fairly won, but which in her generosity she wished bestowed upon another."

Moved by Fanny's distress, Ellen, laying her hand upon her grandfather's arm, said in her gentlest tone, "forgive her, we will be friends yet," and addressing a few kind words to her, passed into the garden.

"Dear Nellie!" cried Mary, "I could hardly keep from telling you; we knew it all the time."

"It was a hard task for Mary to keep the secret," said Mrs. Gordon, "but here comes Mr. Graham; he cannot lose sight of his newly found child." Seated between her grandfather and lover, Ellen was content to listen, striving to calm her feelings.

"I promised my friend, Robert," said Mr. Graham, speaking to Ellen, "that I would endeavor to persuade you to give my little friend, Mary, a right to the title of relationship which she tells me she already claims; am I likely to prove successful? There is no one I could better trust you to," joining their hands, "though I am selfish enough to wish you to make your home with me. I cannot part with my grandchildren if they will agree to stay," he added, smiling.

Ellen leaned her head against Mr. Gordon's shoulder, encircled by the arm which, henceforth, was to protect her from all rough winds, and found relief in tears.

Returning to the house, they found Mr. Graham had acquainted his guests with what was to follow; the man of God was waiting, and in a few moments the humble orphan was the wife of the handsome, wealthy Mr. Gordon.

Gross and vulgar minds will always pay a higher respect to wealth than to talent; for wealth, although it be a far less efficient source of power than talent, happens to be far more intelligible.

THE REPENTANT FATHER-IN-LAW.

BY R. P. BOYLSTON.

It was a beautiful morning in the "leafy month of June;" a sunny summer morning, with all that the words suggest of rippling streams, and gorgeous flowers, and perfumed air, and music, light and loveliness. The windows were thrown open in the parlors of a beautiful cottage, situated in one of our pleasant western villages; and by the open casement stand two persons—a young man and his bride. He was speaking earnestly to the lady, who listened to his persuasive tones, now with tears, and now with brighter looks and hopeful smiles.

He was a picturesque looking person; long, dark hair, eager and wonderfully brilliant eyes, regular and delicately turned features, persuasive smiles, noble figure, graceful and expressive manner; and his character was much like his personal appearance—bold, daring, decided and determined, earnest and ardent in his attachments, as in everything else, somewhat capricious, yet always obliging in disposition—a person to interest irresistibly every one who knew

him; one, for whom all predicted a brilliant, if not a peaceful and happy life. This was Augustus Grey.

He had met Eleanor Howard the year previous at a fashionable summer resort, and was charmed with her beauty and intelligence. She was so noble, so gentle, so thoroughly kind and good, that before he knew it, she had won his heart. An heiress, beautiful and accomplished, admired by all, and loved by those who knew her, Nora Howard seemed only formed for joy and pleasure. Yet with all her happiness, no one was more unselfish, more thoughtful for others than she. Augustus Grey was, from their first meeting, her most devoted attendant; and soon he found that all his dreams of future life seemed dreary and desolate if her face was not there to brighten the picture.

He had strayed one day from the crowd of loungers at his hotel, to seek the cool shades of the forest a mile distant. Threading his way through the winding paths, he came suddenly upon a little opening, where the underbrush had been cleared away, and the sward was green and soft; and for a little space the babbling trout-brook ran still and deep, and the broad trees overhead formed a magnificent canopy of deep green, through which the noonday sun could scarcely penetrate. Here and there a ray found an entrance between the leaves, and bright spots shone on the grass and the dark waters, like eyes looking back to the blue sky above them. Little trout floated to the surface of the water, their speckled scales glistening when the sunlight fell upon them; wild birds would suddenly pour forth a strain of melody, then pause to listen to its answer in the distant forest. And, seated on the bank, watching the ripples, and the fish gliding in the clear depths; now gazing at the waving leaves above, now resting her cheek lovingly on the mossy stone beside her, was Nora Howard.

How beautiful she was! Her rich hair pushed carelessly back from her pearly cheek, a smile parting her red lips; her attitude careless, languid, yet so graceful. Augustus Grey could no longer resist. The summer beauty around him, the new beauty he saw in her he already loved; moved his heart strongly. Words of passion, of the heart's eloquence, rushed to his lips as he threw himself on the grass before her.

"Nora—Nora—love me!"

Could she resist him? It was he of whom she was dreaming when he came. It was the light of his smile, which imagination had pictured brighter to her than the sunlight around her. It was the music of his voice which, still

lingering in her memory, was sweeter to her than the murmur of the breeze, or the song of birds. Smiles, tears, swift succeeding blushes, were the answer to his tale of love, and then, in that silent greenwood, they promised to be all to each other.

O, the happy days that glided over those young lovers, like a dream! Thoughtless of the future, forgetful of the past, the present, all love and beauty, was enough for them. But dark realities will come to chill the brightest dream of romance. When the season closed, Eleanor, with her aunt, returned to her home. Her lover accompanied her, and formally asked of her father the hand of Miss Howard; but was answered by a peremptory refusal. Entreaties, expostulations, promises from Augustus, prayers and tears from Eleanor, were alike ineffectual, the refusal was firmly reiterated, and no reason assigned.

Then Augustus Grey turned to the daughter, and urged, with a lover's sophistry, an elopement. One after another of her objections was overcome; and when she pleaded her gratitude to her father, he answered by telling of his own love to her; and his bright eyes grew so sad, and his voice so touching, that she yielded. They were privately married, and he took her to his own home; then wrote to her father soliciting forgiveness.

"I tell you, my Nora," said he, as they stood side by side in their new home, "your father will forgive you. He can never resist you, darling, if he can me. You are so beautiful and good, you deserve to be, and you must be, happy. Even should your father refuse to forgive you for having loved me, have I no power to make your life's journey a pleasant way? We are both young. I have health, and force, and energy, and fortune. Trust me, Nora; I will protect you; I will strive to make you forget that there is in our English vocabulary such a word as sorrow—at least, that in your heart there has ever been such a feeling. Think of the days of delight before us, my own. I believe I am a true prophet; don't you, Nora?" O, yes! What could his voice utter that she would not believe?

"I shall show you, Nora, and your father, that I am a good husband; at least, one in whom he can feel no shame. Look up, sweet, and smile, and try to be happy. See our beautiful home! Is it not lovely this delicious summer morning? Hear the birds; what wild, exulting bursts of melody! Look at the river! How the waves flash and sparkle in the sunlight! Shall we alone be sad in such a scene?

You have surely done no wrong; unless you think it wrong to render me so blessed."

"Are you so happy, Augustus?" she answered, the smiles returning at his bidding; "then I am happy, too."

"What happy things are youth, and love, and sunshine." The bride has sacrificed for the love of one who, but a few months before, was a stranger, the affection her father has shown her from her infancy; yet, under the bewilderment of the spell around her, sorrow is indeed a forgotten word, life is but another name for gladness, the future a long vista of brightness and beauty, yet scarcely thought of; the past, till she knew him, a dream, half forgotten; the present, alone, perfect in itself—a complete happiness.

It was merry Christmas eve. Sleigh bells were ringing merrily in the streets, and bursts of laughter floated forth in the cold, crisp air. The stately city houses were lighted brilliantly, and occasionally, through the parted curtains, at some windows, might be seen the graceful forms and bright faces of some joyous assemblage within.

In a magnificent apartment of one of the stateliest houses, sat an old man. Every article around him—the costly carpets, the heavy velvet curtains, the quaintly carved sofas, the large inviting chairs—spoke of luxury and wealth. One side of the room was occupied by shelves, filled with books; expensive and beautiful pictures covered the walls; a glittering chandelier threw a softening light over the room. It seemed the very home of ease; but, by the haggard face of the old man, not of happiness. I have called him old, yet he was scarcely fifty; but his form was bent, and his hair gray, and his forehead wrinkled; and there was a careworn look upon his thin face, which told of a life of trouble, perhaps of sin. This was the father of Eleanor Grey.

He sat down that Christmas night, when thousands of hearts were beating with pleasure, brooding over his own life. His childhood rose up before him—his gay, careless childhood; his youth, at first so full of hope; then came to his memory a tale of passion, and of wrong; the bitter hour when anger and revenge made his heart their dwelling place; his manhood, when all pleasure palled, and with a cold sneer at his own wretchedness, he made ambition his god; the last smile of his broken-hearted wife; her touching prayer as she was dying—"You have never cared for me, but do try to love our little Nora;" his daughter, imploring him to forgive

her rash act of disobedience; and his stern refusal and cutting taunt; all this came back to him, and bowing his head on the little table before him, he groaned in remorse.

At length, arising, he unlocked an escrutoire, and took from it a daguerreotype, and a miniature on ivory. The daguerreotype revealed to him the fair face of his daughter in her girlhood. Long the father gazed on that bright countenance, then with a heavy sigh, restored it to its resting-place, and turned to the other picture. It was the image of his daughter's husband, yet an ideal of female loveliness. It was the mother of Augustus Grey, taken also in her girlhood, when she was the promised bride of George Howard. Theirs was an old story, and one too common. The lover was exacting, the lady was proud, and both were unyielding; they quarrelled and parted. The lady married soon, to please her lover, and he afterwards married a fortune. She became a woman of the world; outwardly, all that was gay and brilliant, even, apparently, a loving wife and devoted mother; but, who shall tell how bitter were her struggles to maintain the semblance of what she could not feel! They never met again, but her memory still rankled in his heart, though he strove to forget her very existence. She was not one to be forgotten; but his love changed to a bitter hatred, and when her son came to him suing for his daughter, he only remembered the woe Alice Chester had brought to him.

"What! my daughter marry Alice Chester's son! Never!" he exclaimed. "I had rather see her dead."

But sitting so desolate that Christmas night, the thought came to him, "was I not rash?" He was so lonely, so wretched—Eleanor had always been so dutiful, so good, so happy—even the memory of Alice Chester was softened; for she was dead, then; and he reflected that Augustus Grey had committed no wrong in loving his daughter. He might have had them with him then, to brighten and enliven his grand house, which was lonely with all its beauty; but instead, there was want, and woe—alas! guilt and disgrace; and George Howard groaned again as he thought that in all this his share was not light. His course of madness and folly was constantly before him; he could not forget it.

He had cast off his only daughter; had seen her husband high-hearted and hopeful at first; then yielding to the force of circumstances, to loss of fortune and loss of friends, battling bravely with poverty; finally disgraced for crimes he had never committed; he had seen this wreck of a brave young heart, and madly

smiled as he gazed at the ruined prospects, the blighted life, the crushed hopes, of those whom he might have saved.

Was it now too late? Was there still some reparation he might make? At least, he resolved to try. What he could do now he would. Conscience once aroused would not again slumber. He must make some exertion; and O! joy once more to that old man, if it be not yet too late.

Let us turn now from the residence of luxury and splendor, to another, a far different scene—the hospital of one of our State prisons. Upon a pallet in one corner of the large room, separated from the rest of the diseased and wretched inmates by a paper screen, lay a wasted form. Ay, start and look again! There is, indeed, in those sharpened features, expressive of such hopelessness, very little to tell of the formerly gay, sanguine Augustus Grey. The once strong, graceful figure was stretched helpless on that humble cot—the features like chiselled marble, the proud, daring look gone; the bright eye wild, unnatural, and full of anguish. The kind-hearted minister sat beside him, listening to him, and soothing him as best he could.

"Yes, pray for me," said the sick man, in a sad, broken voice, "that God will forgive me the wrong I have done my poor wife. I knew she loved me, and took advantage of that love to lead her into sorrow, perhaps to sin. Wo for my poor Nora when my wild words persuaded her to forsake her father's home for mine. But yet I have striven to save her from such sorrow. Alas! how vainly—how vainly I have striven!"

"But I tell you," he continued, with something of his old eagerness; "I swear to you—I am not guilty! I am a dying man, but if reason is spared to me, my last words shall be, on oath, as surely solemn as oath can be, that I am not guilty. I swear to you on this holy book; listen to me that you may tell my wife. I swear to you that I never knew of the fire till I saw the flames! It may comfort her a little when the world condemns me! She, who never doubted my lightest word, will hold as sacred my dying oath. O, if I could see her once more!"

"My poor boy, your pardon may yet come, if Judge Howard does not again oppose it; at least, your wife may come again. Hope yet."

"Hope? No! not in this life!—I, who was once so hopeful. Thank God, I have still one last hope left me—that blessed home where the weary are at rest—a home for even Nora and me!"

Heavily the iron door swung upon its hinges,

and attended by a keeper, a spirit-like figure glided in, and the happiest face beamed there that had brightened that room for many a day. The sick men blessed it as it passed their couches, and Augustus Grey felt a new life in every vein as he looked on it.

"Nora!" he exclaimed.

"My husband!"

"You have come," said he. "Once more I may see. It is all over, Nora; my fate is fixed. I, who was to have been your protector, your happiness, am come to this—to die; and here—"

"No, Augustus! No! Look at me, and see if I am come to say farewell."

"You have good news!" a sudden gleam of hope lighting up those worn features. "My pardon!"

"Here, here, Augustus."

"And I am free! Thank God! thank God!" and he sank insensible on his couch.

Turn now once more to the library at Judge Howard's mansion. It is the same room we have before seen, but now it is enlivened by bright faces and glad tones, loving words, and low, musical laughs. There are happy hearts there to-night. One of the most comfortable sofas has been rolled before the fire; Judge Howard himself has arranged there the softest cushions, and on them is resting the form of Augustus Grey. He is still ill, but freedom and acknowledged innocence seem to have given him new strength and hope. The former brightness has not come back to his face, and the eagerness and impulsiveness are gone forever; but a calm, happy smile hovers on his lip, and a subdued light in his eye, which speaks of hopes higher than earth. His wife—the faithful Eleanor—sits silently beside him; her heart is too full of joy for words to utter. Her idolatrous love has caused her bitter repentance. Now she has learned not to love her husband less, but that there is a Friend in heaven who is better than all others.

Judge Howard sits near at a table, surrounded with books and papers. He gazes tenderly at "his children." A load of care and suffering has been lifted from him. Old feelings, of tenderness and love, long since forgotten, come crowding to his heart again, and his form is more erect, his brow more calm, his eye more clear, and his soul more hopeful, than for many a year.

"Augustus," he exclaims at length; "my son—can you indeed forgive me?"

"Judge Howard, not one word of this. It is I who have wronged you; it is I who must beg forgiveness."

"Let us forget the past with its sin and sorrow, we are so happy now," interposes Nora.

"Rather," replies Augustus, "let us remember it, not for useless regrets, but for future profit; and perhaps in sunny Italy, where our future home will be, I may yet grow strong, and with my father's aid, fulfil my prophecy, and become yet, my Nora, your protector, and your happiness."

BREAKING A MATCH.

BY MRS. E. WELLMONT.

"Of course, Mr. Snyder, if you should marry my daughter, you will expect to maintain her in the same style we have ever observed. Marietta is a dear little pet, and we shall lose one half our enjoyment by acceding to your proposals."

"Certainly, madam, I shall endeavor to keep your daughter in as elevated a position as ever. Her friends will, I trust, never be ashamed to acknowledge me as her husband. To her I shall surrender my fortune, my life, my all."

These words having been uttered by a fastidious bachelor, who had sought for a wife for years, and whose affections had become suddenly enlisted towards Miss Marietta Lee at a watering-place, gave us a shock as they were repeated. We had known something of this said Marietta. She had been the idolized pet of the family since her birth. The choicest nursing was secured for her baby-hood, the best servants for gratifying her freaks, when she advanced to childhood, and the most expensive teachers for educating her in girlhood; but Marietta grew wild and ungovernable, was twice ejected from a boarding-school, and at the age of fifteen "completed her education" under a private governess, who was influenced by a heavy salary to bear with all her caprices, though she often lamented her hard fate.

At the age of sixteen, our heroine was brought out into society. A large ball was made for her, the most elaborate skill was displayed upon her person, and every effort was made that she should become the belle of the season. But yet Marietta Lee "did not take." Young men laughed at the ill-concealed efforts of her ambitious mother, and, as is often done in high life, those who partook most freely of their hospitalities were the first to ridicule her mean and superficial attainments. The next season, therefore, she was introduced to a fashionable watering-place, and thither our friend Snyder was sojourning when he met with the misfortune to fall in love with Miss Lee. Now we had often observed the cautious reserve with which Snyder approached the ladies of his acquaintance, and he always manifested great shrewdness in detecting whatever was opprobrious in matter or manner. We used to think a perfect intuition apprised him at once of what it took us some months to apprehend, and thus we predicted our friend, somewhat a bachelor, would never become ensnared by any wily arts. Judge then of our surprise when we received from him the following announcement:

"MY DEAR MADAM: You are aware I come here for the restoration of my health. I have attained my object in an unexpected manner. I must tell you I have fallen in love with one of the prettiest specimens of budding womanhood that it has ever been my good fortune to meet. She is a little angel; all sweetness, fresh as the morning, and as free from coquetry as her childish simplicity would indicate. She is just brought out, so I am not revelling upon sweets which others have culled to satiety. As you are acquainted with this lovely model of female beauty, why have you never pointed me to her as a suitable companion to cheer me in my loneliness?"

"I suppose being really in love, has restored me to health—the secret lying just here, that whereas I thought entirely of myself before, now I think only of another. Truly, I do not know whither my present extatic state will lead me. I would live forever beneath Marietta's sunny smiles, while all my endeavors shall henceforth tend to make her happiness complete. The fair creature is insensible to flattery, and her mother tells me she was never obliged to reprove her in her life. Do you not rejoice that I can bid farewell to testy boarding-house keepers, and in some little sequestered vale inhabit a cottage made verdant by flowers climbing over my porch, while it is vocal with songs of endearment within? Did you think I could muster so much affection? The dormant element has lain so long unawakened, that it now puts forth a strength unknown to me before. I know you will give me your congratulations when I tell you that the object of my affection is no less than *Marietta Lee*!"

"Truly,

G. SNYDER."

It is needless to add it was all over with me, for I had known this protege, and watched parental movements, and inwardly hoped no man would be duped by mere blandishments. Horror-stricken with the thought that my worthy friend was thus ensnared, I summoned all my resolution and determined to free myself from countenancing his delusion, and in the part of true friendship, I replied:

"DEAR GEORGE: If I could confine you in a lunatic asylum, I should have a hope that you would regain your reason. As it is, Heaven forbid you should not be made sensible of your indiscretion. Why, you have engaged yourself to the veriest flirt that sports among butterflies. Marietta Lee is a proud, self-willed, untamed, hoydenish girl, without claim to gentility, and the merest creature of fashion and folly. She will tease you to death with her silly wants, and keep you forever among a giddy round of gaieties, herself being heartless, and looking only to you to supply her wishes from a full purse. Think, George, of uniting your destiny to such an one! How will you keep a family together—nay, how will you keep yourselves together, with such discordant tastes? Nonsense! talk about your cottage with such a flower within it, to mock the beauty of those without!"

"I talk plainly, because you are blinded; and with a true regard to your interests, I would un-

seal your vision, and bid you see things as they are. If by this act our friendship is forever severed, I must abide the result with a consciousness that I have discharged my obligations. Yours, as ever, E."

We will suppose ourselves in the drawing-room of the Ocean House. In yonder recess, half hidden by the full drapery, sits Snyder, Marietta Lee, and her mother.

"Georgy," says Marietta, half coaxingly and half pettishly, "what makes you so sad, this evening? Any bad news, hey? Ships lost, crops destroyed, or fires without insurances? Why don't you smile as formerly? I shall be jealous that you are afraid Mr. Quimby will succeed you. Now cheer up; you know Quimby has no fortune, and I marry for riches. O, mama, isn't that a splendid diamond brooch Miss Evans wears? and what a bandeau of jewels encased Miss Rider's forehead last evening? George, a splendid set of diamonds, I am told, costs three thousand dollars. These, added to my other trinkets, will make up quite a little fortune on my wedding day."

"Mr. Snyder, have you seen Count Lutsoff to-day?" inquired Mrs. Lee. "He is such an admirer of our Marietta, that unless you guard her watchfully, she may slip away from you."

"O, mother, what a beautiful hand that count has! Such massive seal rings! and that diamond on his little finger, he tells me, was the gift of a hand who is to make him his heir. I think he is charming."

Snyder thought of the letter he had received.

"Mama," pursued our chattering Marietta, "would it be any way improper for me to ride with the Spanish nobleman this afternoon?" And in an undertone: "I'm sure I don't want to be chained to old Snyder because he is rich."

George Snyder heard the whole, while pretending to read the newspaper, and he soon left the room. Marietta was missing that afternoon, and when she returned from her "enchanted excursion with the nobleman," she found the following *billet doux* upon her table:

"MISS LEE: Forgive me—the spell is broken. I can be no longer yours. I have been deceived in regard to your tastes and capabilities to make me happy. I am confident our short engagement cannot leave any regret upon your volatile heart by having it sundered. By finding out my mistake, I trust we shall both be saved a life of misery. That you may become a discreet, affectionate, sincere, and loving wife, you will be obliged to lay aside much of that duplicity of character which I am forced to acknowledge I have recently detected in you. I trust I have not wronged you by this frank explanation. Be assured, I shall ever remain your well-wisher.
GEORGE SNYDER."

With a proud and scornful toss of the head, Marietta Lee threw the note under her tiny foot. Then she seized it and tore it in a thousand pieces. She was thankful thus to rid herself of an old and fastidious lover. Here were "barons and counts," "a world of gaiety," and the free enjoyment of picking anew from her admirers.

Mrs. Lee sought Mr. Snyder, and a long and serious explanation followed. We never knew the opinion with which one parted from the other, but we learned that Marietta flirted the whole season, and at last caught a beau, of which her father could only rid himself and daughter by paying his expenses and sending him back to his native country.

We generally despise interference in match-making; but when we know a friend is profoundly ignorant of the qualifications of a person whose character is carefully concealed that she may win him merely for his position and establishment, we maintain it is criminal not to make known to him the fact. At any rate, we preserved an unbroken friendship by testing the experiment, and will conclude our history by giving the subjoined from George Snyder:

"MY DEAR FRIEND: I feel you have saved me from the brink of a precipice. My love was but a passionate fire that a short intercourse would have consumed, had I not received your timely counsel, which cleared my vision. I shall never dare trust again to my own unguided observation. Marriage makes our weal or woe for this life, and it may be for another; therefore, all inconsiderate haste and rash resolves, if timely rebuked, as in my own case, would save hundreds from future wretchedness.

Your truly obliged, G. SNYDER."

In this case, it seemed pardonable—nay more, a positive duty, to unseal the vision of our friend, because we esteemed him too highly to permit him to be thus imposed upon. Still, it is not usually a safe example to follow.